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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9809
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002454

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2017
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PINS](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: WEST BANK POLITICAL REACTION TO ANNAPOLIS MIXED;
MOST SEE POSITIVE BEGINNING, BUT SAY CONCRETE PROGRESS
ESSENTIAL

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas Duffy, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. West Bank political contacts gave mixed reviews to the Annapolis joint understanding and speeches. Most offered praise for elements of the joint understanding, especially the USG monitoring role, but expressed doubts about Israeli seriousness to meet Roadmap obligations or conduct serious permanent status negotiations. All said the GOI should take actions on the ground to improve the negotiating atmosphere and demonstrate to Palestinians that there is a credible process. End summary.

Abd al-Qadr: Annapolis Statements Positive,
But Rapid, Visible Progress Essential

¶2. (C) PM Fayyad's Jerusalem Affairs Advisor and Fatah leader Hatim Abd al-Qadr said the Annapolis conference and joint statement indicate a positive beginning. However, he said the real test of Israeli seriousness will be negotiations that start December 12. Abd al-Qadr said the PA's biggest achievement at Annapolis was securing U.S. agreement to judge performance of Roadmap obligations. He said he is encouraged by this development, which for him indicates more serious USG engagement in the process. He said his expectations for dramatic progress remain low given the difficulty of the issues, but his confidence in the process has increased due to a stronger USG role.

¶3. (C) Abd al-Qadr commented that the GOI should take immediate steps to convince the Palestinian public that their situation will improve. He said release of prisoners and the lifting of closures/checkpoints are the most important actions the GOI can take to improve Palestinians' lives and perceptions of permanent status negotiations. Abd al-Qadr said he doubts Israeli PM Olmert is strong enough to implement a permanent status agreement even if the negotiating teams reach one, but "he remains hopeful that the general atmosphere will transform from war to peacemaking.8

Fatah Leader Faris: Annapolis Demonstrates
Political Will, But Political Ability Unclear

¶4. (C) Fatah leader Qaddura Faris said the Annapolis speeches demonstrated seriousness on the part of all three parties, and the meeting created a positive atmosphere to start negotiations. However, he said he doubts PM Olmert has the political strength to conduct serious negotiations. He said he thinks Olmert's Knesset coalition is shaky and will handcuff negotiating efforts. Faris said goodwill and optimism from Annapolis will quickly dwindle if there are not

real steps taken to improve Palestinians' lives. He said "serious prisoner releases," lifting closures and allowing Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem to reopen will all help convince Palestinians that a credible peace process is underway, while Israeli incursions and arrest operations create problems.

PLO ExComm Member: Israelis Not Serious
on Reaching Peace Agreement

15. (C) PLO Executive Committee (ExComm) member Saleh Rafat (FIDA) said Annapolis was positive in that it initiated a USG monitoring mechanism to judge both sides' Roadmap performance, but he criticized the joint understanding as demonstrating lack of Israeli seriousness. He said agreement on permanent status issues requires Israeli political will and a decision by PM Olmert, not just more negotiations. Rafat said "President Bush's statement regarding the Jewish nature of the Israeli state is harmful to the negotiations process." He said as negotiations resume, the USG should ensure that serious steps are immediately taken by the GOI to include lifting internal West Bank roadblocks/checkpoints and easing movement in general, releasing more prisoners, and above all stopping IDF incursions into Palestinian towns. He commented that the PA has met more than 90 percent of its Roadmap obligations, and that it is time for Israel to move on its commitments. Rafat criticized the GOI for refusing to reopen Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem.

DUFFY